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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 001083

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [CN](#)
SUBJECT: TALKS BETWEEN COMORAN ISLAND LEADERS SEW CONFUSION

REF: ANTANANARIVO 1056 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES BRIAN T. NEUBERT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND
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11. (C) SUMMARY: Grand Comore Island President Mohamed Abdouloihab's unannounced October 19 visit to Anjouan has Union Government officials irate and the international community confused. Anjouan authorities reportedly hope Abdouloihab's visit will be perceived as the first step toward official recognition of Anjouan "President" Bacar's legitimacy, while Union Government officials have privately expressed confusion and discontent. At the same time the African Union (AU) representative expressed appreciation for the recent USG statement in support of AU sanctions against Anjouan authorities, he also worried Abdouloihab's visit may undermine their impact. Whatever his intentions, Abdouloihab's already waning popularity at home is taking a hit, as is public perception of the Union Government's authority. In response to French objections, the Union Government may remove some civilian names from its notional list of people in Anjouan to be targeted by AU sanctions (reftel). END SUMMARY.

12. (U) In a 20-minute closed door meeting at the Anjouan airport, Abdouloihab met with his de-facto counterpart, "President" of Anjouan Colonel Mohamed Bacar. Reportedly hoping Abdouloihab's visit would be perceived as the first step toward official recognition of Bacar's legitimacy, authorities on Anjouan "rolled out the red carpet" during the three-day visit. Anjouan officials publicly applauded Abdouloihab's openness to dialogue, in contrast with Union President Sambi's rejection of Bacar's proposal for further talks.

NEGATIVE REACTIONS IN MORONI
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13. (SBU) Following the visit, Abdouloihab's already waning popularity on Grande Comore is taking a hit. Citizens are publicly criticizing Abdouloihab, who was Sambi's favorite in the May island elections, for "going behind Sambi's back" and reneging on his public promise not to sit down at the table with the rebel Bacar. Ministry of Exterior Relations officials have privately expressed confusion, saying Abdouloihab's actions were "not appreciated." The Parliament in Grande Comores is split: some deputies have been calling for a motion to censure Abdouloihab's government since

September, while others boycotted the extraordinary parliamentary session called October 19 for this purpose.

AU SANCTIONS UNDERMINED?

14. (SBU) AU representative Mourad Taiati convened an international community meeting in Moroni October 22. He first expressed his appreciation for the recent USG statement in support of AU sanctions against Anjouan authorities, saying, "The U.S. position is clear." He then expressed confusion over Abdouloihab's "incomprehensible" visit, saying he could have at least waited 45 days after the application of sanctions so as not to undermine their impact. French Ambassador Christian Job said France agrees with the U.S. statement and also has trouble understanding Abdouloihab's visit, as it sews confusion amidst AU sanctions.

15. (C) At the meeting, Minister of Defense Dossar presented the government's notional list of 97 people in Anjouan who should be targeted by AU sanctions, including: Colonel Bacar, Anjouan "ministers," Bacar's chief of staff, civil and military cabinet members, gendarmes, and civilians (businessmen and parliamentarians). Claiming that innocents could be targeted, French Ambassador Job asked that civilians be removed from the list. The Malagasy Consul expressed concern that the list only identifies name, village and position in a country where the same names are quite common. Date of birth and affiliation are also necessary to avoid targeting innocent people. Dossar seemed willing to revise the list.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: It is likely Abdouloihab intended his

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visit as an initial step to overcome inter-island problems rather than a symbolic recognition of Bacar's de-facto leadership. Regardless, it appears his failure to coordinate with the Union Government may ultimately weaken the already shaky public perception of the Union Government's authority and possibly even undermine AU sanctions. AU Envoy Jose Francisco Madeira will arrive in Moroni October 26 to discuss sanctions further. END COMMENT.
NEUBERT